

Testifying

- Know who is on the committee, and who will be speaking before and after you.
 - For example, if you know you're testifying before a medical cannabis patient, set the stage with testimony explaining the science and research. The patient can follow with their corroborating personal story.
 - Legislators are busy and have tight schedules, be sure to stay on track and stick to your allotted time.
 - Practice in advance to make sure you're well within your time limit. Getting cut off can be embarrassing, look unprofessional, and you might miss out on delivering the most important part of your testimony.
 - Avoid ideas and information that are not relevant. This will only annoy the legislators and damage your credibility.
 - Find out if you need to present written testimony before or leave it after. It's fine to read directly from your written testimony. If you're speaking without notes, at least have bullet points printed to keep you on track.
 - As you're preparing your statement, research your reps, the bill's sponsors and cosponsors, and the particular committee members you'll be addressing. (Continued on next page)
- Know their position on other topics beyond cannabis for potential alignment. You will be able to greet and thank them individually. They will realize you are an educated and concerned constituent.
 - Example: *Thank you Senator Johnson for your work on the state liquor control board. Your advocacy to keep our schools safe is one that I admire and am grateful for.*

Your Content

- Provide briefly your professional background and why you support the bill you are discussing.
- Be honest if you don't know an answer. Say something like:
 - *"I don't recall or have that information right now, but will follow up and get that to you promptly."*
- REMEMBER, LEGISLATORS OFTEN DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT SPECIFICS! The bill you care about is a small piece of their huge workload. You are the expert, especially when it comes to cannabis.
- Have some basic information ready if they ask for it, Examples: info on the ECS, synthetic vs. phytocannabinoids, effective programs in existence. The [CannaKeys database](#) for evidence based research can also be helpful.
- Visual aides can help explain salient points, use them.

For more support advocating before your legislators, reach out to the American Cannabis Nurses Association's Policy & Government Affairs at WWW.CANNABISNURSE.ORG

TESTIFYING TIPS

SPEAK EVEN IF YOUR VOICE SHAKES

In politics, the old saying "You catch more flies with honey than vinegar" totally applies.

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Sharing your voice as a nurse and constituent are important, but testifying in front of your legislators can be intimidating. These tips will help you prepare and be successful.

How to Prepare

- Know the ACNA's [Scope and Standards of Practice for Cannabis Nurses](#).
- Know the NCSBN [National Nursing Guidelines for Patients Using Medical Marijuana](#).
- Consider joining the other cannabis friendly nurses associations for access to allies, information, and support.
- Explore your state Board Of Nursing's stance on cannabis, and see whether your state has a [nursing position paper](#) on cannabis.
- Use [NORML](#) or Americans for Safe Access, as a resource to review your current state laws and policies on medical cannabis, adult use, and hemp.
- Look at your state's government website for any cannabis-related legislation. Use the Keywords "cannabis" or "marijuana" to find current bills, their sponsors, and which committee is actively looking at the legislation.
- Even if you're focusing on one bill in particular, it's still helpful to understand any other related or conflicting bills.

Whether it is your first time, or you have testified dozens of times, things can always go awry! Here are some common mistakes to avoid!

- **Always go to the bathroom beforehand (if they've put a mic on you, take it off or turn it off before you head to the loo)**
- **You'll be nervous. Wear deodorant (written by a true farmer)!**
- **Legislatures are formal places, so dress your best out of respect**
- **Be selective with your handouts so they actually get seen**
- **If you can, turn off your phone**
- **No swearing - even for comedy or emphasis**
- **Have notes to keep your testimony on time and on point**
- **Bring water and a snack. You may be there for a while**
- **DON'T bring your vape pen with you through security**
- **Plan where you're parking and how you'll pay for it**

Steps to Taking Action

- If you don't know your legislator's stance on a particular issue, start by introducing yourself as a constituent and asking about their position.
- If they don't have a position yet - and many don't - this is a great opportunity to educate them and set yourself up as a resource for when they want to learn more.
- If they oppose something you support, don't worry. You still have an opportunity to shift or soften their thinking. So be polite and explain your personal stance on the issue.
- If your legislator has sponsored or co-sponsored a bill you support, thanking them is a great way to make a connection.

Facts are valuable for framing and supporting arguments, but personal stories have much more emotional impact. Be sure to include both.

How to get a Speaking Slot

- Contact your rep and ask if they can help you get a slot to testify they support cannabis legislation. Avoid asking an anti-cannabis rep for help testifying on a cannabis-related bill.
- Alternatively, contact the bill sponsor and ask them for a slot. Tell them who you are, what you want to say, and why you would be an ideal person to testify.
- Contact your local NORML chapter, cannabis industry association, or other state based cannabis association for assistance. They may even have a lobbyist who can help you.
- When you ask to testify, remind them that nurses are the most trusted profession 19 years running, and that nurses have a unique position and opportunity to advocate on behalf of patients and consumers, especially vulnerable people and plants.